

BLM News

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2006 Pre Fire Season #2

PROTECTING YOUR HOME FROM WILDFIRE

If you live in the country outside of town, the sight of dark, billowing clouds of smoke just over the closest rise and wind blowing towards your house – is frightening to say the least. What should you do?

“The time to get concerned about your home is not during fire season,” said Bureau of Land Management Elko Field Office Fire Management Officer Joe Freeland. “Today is the right time to look at property, assess its fire risk, and start creating defensible space.”

Here are things that homeowners can do to reduce fire hazards on their property:

- Clear all grasses like cheatgrass and red brome, as well as brush, from within 30 feet of houses and other structures. Remove the grass; do not burn it! The 30-foot clearance will reduce the chance of a wildfire igniting your home and provide a safety zone or “defensible space” for firefighters to work.
- Keep the area lean, clean and green throughout the fire season; break up continuous layers of vegetation, use fire resistant plants where possible.
- Make sure Liquefied Petroleum Gas Tanks have a 10 foot clearance of flammable vegetation.
- Make sure all flammable materials, including firewood, is kept away from all buildings.
- Keep a connected garden hose with spray nozzle attached in case there is an accidental fire start.

“Defensible space is extremely important, it provides fire fighters with a buffer in which they may be able to fend off approaching fire,” said Tom Turk, Nevada Division of Forestry (NDF) Acting Regional Forester. “The Nevada Division of Forestry will fight fire very aggressively to protect the life and property of Nevada residents. However, the reality is there are homes that are winners and homes that are losers. Homes with defensible space stand a much great chance of

being saved than homes with brush, weeds, building materials, etc. surrounding the structures. If fire fighters are faced with a decision of which home to protect in the event of a wildfire, they focus their efforts and often limited resources on homes that are savable.”

“Communities are recognizing the benefits of forming Fire Safe Chapters and are working with the Nevada Fire Safe Council to form local chapters. This provides access to grant funds which can be used to protect neighborhoods against wildfire,” Turk added. “People are welcome to call NDF or their local Volunteer Fire Departments for a free property evaluation. Fire staff will come out and evaluate property as time and scheduling allows. NDF can be reached at 775-738-3854.”

“The bottom line is that everyone is responsible for fire safety. Fire fighting agencies and Volunteer Fire Departments can only do so much - Mother Nature is not controllable. When there are fire restrictions in place – especially bans on burn barrels and open burning, people must follow them. Last year’s scariest fire in terms of the number of homes threatened – the Chance Fire – started with one person using a burn barrel. For the first time in many years, 2005 saw a huge increase in the number of human-caused fires in Northeastern Nevada. Conservatively, that increase was about 250% over previous years. Although only a small number of the human-caused fires were deliberate, the vast majority were either accidental or due to carelessness. People have to be aware of their actions and consequences in times of high fire danger,” Turk concluded.

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Note to editors – This is the second in a series of 4 articles dealing with the coming fire season. Future topics in the series include information about first responders to wildfires and what to do if a fire does come near homes.